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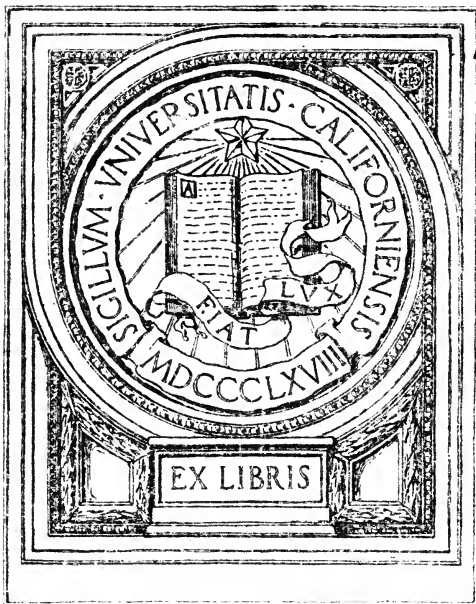
SCENES OF MY CHILDHOOD



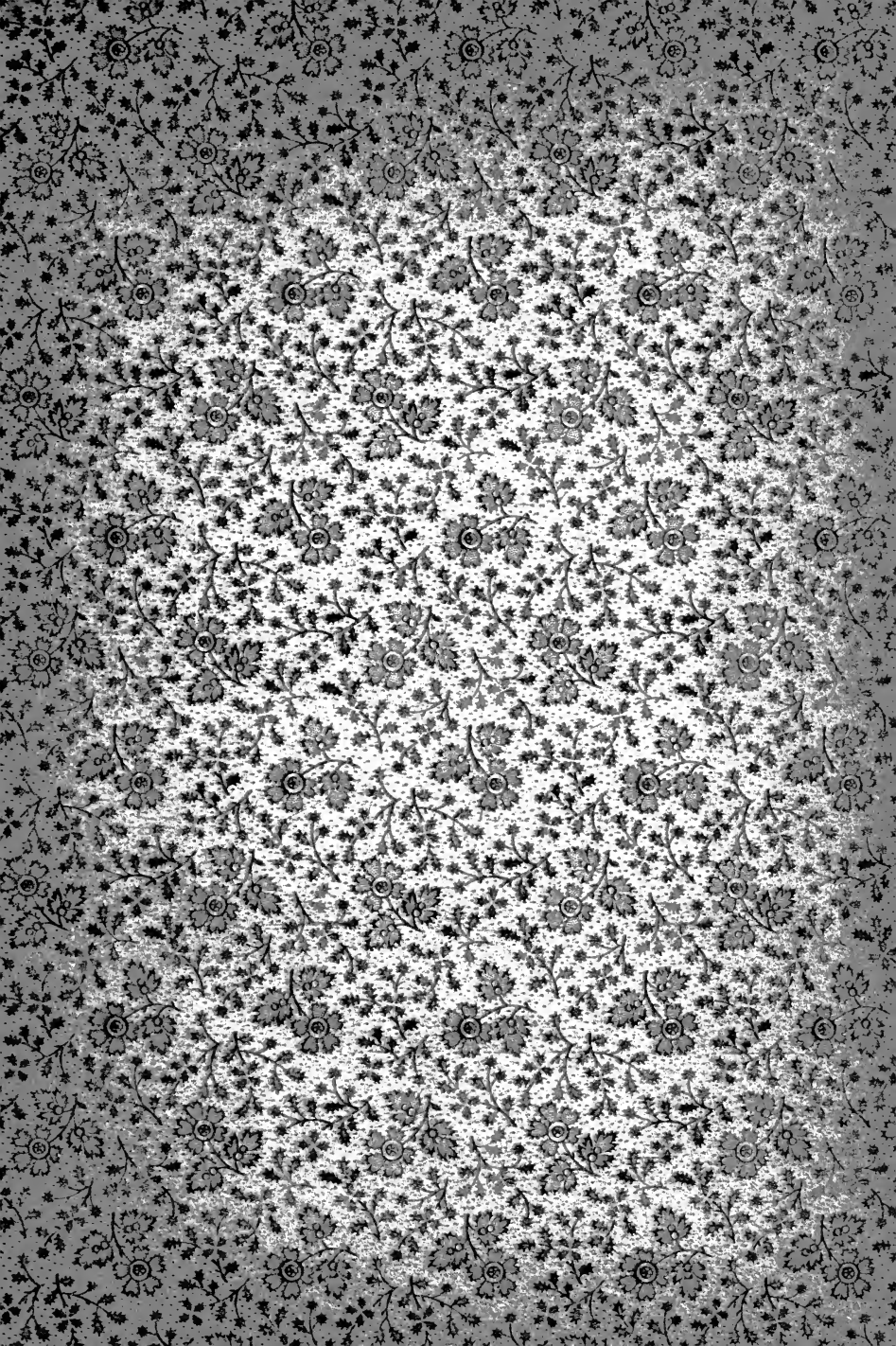
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AND A RIVER WINDS DOWN TO THE SEA.

SCENES OF MY CHILDHOOD.



by

CHARLES ELMER JENNEY.



“There is many a simple song one hears
Not for itself—for the buried years.”

—*Richard Burton.*



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ACKNOWLEDGMENT.

I desire to thank 'The Ladies' World, 'The American Agriculturist, and the Farm Journal for their kindness in allowing me to include in this volume poems first published in their columns.

CHARLES ELMER JENNEY.



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TO MATTAPOISETT—
and TO THOSE

Who love the fields, the grass and flowers,
The greenwood tree, the vine clad bowers,
The piney balm, the April showers
 That start the leaves ;
The song of birds that wake Morn's swoon,
The drone of bees at dreamy noon,
The trill of frogs unto the moon
 Of vernal eves ;

Who love the charming tints of Fall,
(The browning leaf on tree and wall,
And Nature's golden crown of all,—)
 The harvest cheer ;
The whistle that the wild winds blow,
✓ The fretted ghost-work of the snow,
The blazing back-log's fitful glow,
 When Winter's here ;

Whose youthful feet the cow-paths led,
Whom berry-bush and orchard fed,
For whom the hay-stack made a bed
 Airy and broad ;

Who worshipped first in woodland nave,
Chaired by the songsters' sweetest stave,
To whom the brooks their lessons gave
Nor spared the rod ;

Who, exiled to the marts of trade,
Still in some heart-cell, undisplayed,
Like secret locket, rich inlaid,
A memory wear
Of woodlands where you used to roam,
Of meadows flecked with daisy foam,—
A place your lips have still called Home,
And will fore'er.

To You, whom Time may not allow
Your book of verse *beneath the bough*,
But who, in fancy, then and now
Would Nature woo,
I dedicate this book of verse,
Though you may wish it were more terse,
I hope you'll say it might be worse,
When you are through.

CHARLES ELMER JENNEY.



SCENES OF MY CHILDHOOD.

I.

THE ORCHARD.

Gray old trunks and gnarled old branches,
Veterans of the stormy years,
Tried by winter's avalanches,
Scarred by Jove's electric spears ;
Rent and gaping ranks remind of
Comrades fallen by the way ;
Still the Springtime bugle wind of
Muster finds them in array.

When the leaf-buds bursting, send a
Tremor forth upon the breeze,
Covering with a verdant splendor
All the low old apple-trees,
How the heart with gladness thrilling,
Welcomes them to life once more ;
How the birds come back a-trilling
Home, from some far foreign shore.

Bluebirds in their hollows nesting,
Red-breast robins all the day
Singing, chirping, scolding, jesting,
Noisy as the tufted jay.
Showers of blossoms softly sifting
Fleck the close-cropped turf below,—
Snow of June,—its pink-tinged drifting
Stolen from late sunset's glow.

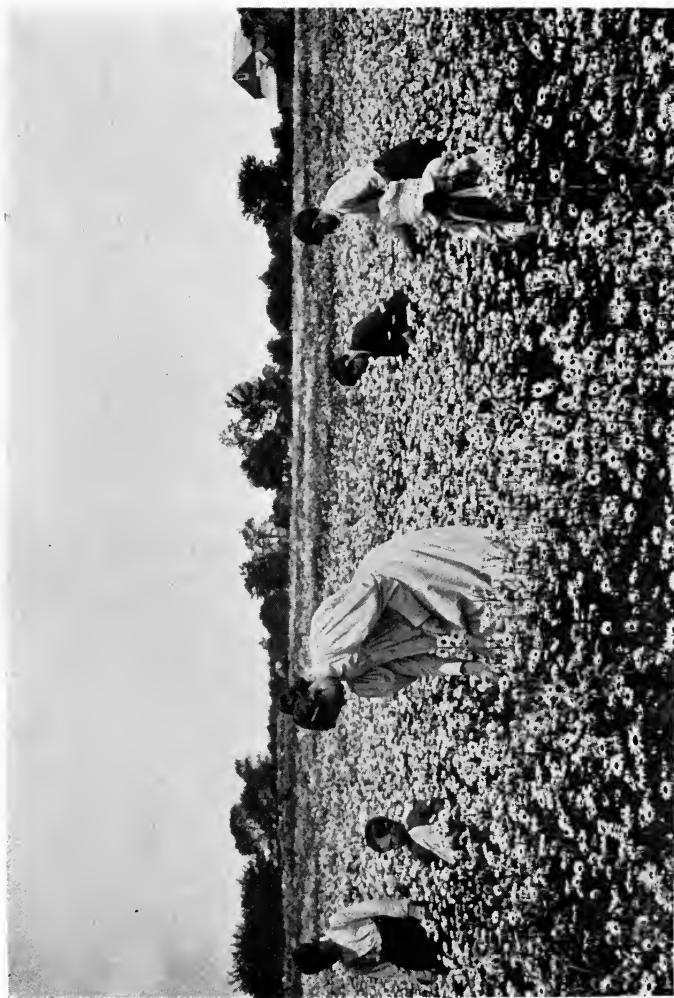
Here when summer days were mellow
Branches curved with goodly prize,—
Russet, red, and green, and yellow,—
Fairer than met Eden's eyes ;

Astrakhan and Summer Sweeting,
Red and gold, the sweet and sour,
Fragrant-scented, toothsome eating,
Brightened many a childhood hour.

Every breeze exacts a tithing,
And the gruff old Autumn gales
Take a toll that's paid with writhing,
All for Charity's avails.
Russet, Baldwin, deftly gleaning,
Scattered o'er the orchard floors ;
Pippin and Rhode Island Greening
Harvested with ruthless force.

Heaped up baskets which the men shall
Come with team to homeward draw.
What a store of fun potential,—
Cider sweet, sipped through a straw ;
Bins a'heap in cobwebbed cellar ;
Barrels freighted with good cheer ;
Seeds to aid the fortune-teller ;
Spicy pies to boyhood dear.

Pictures of the curl-strung tow-string
Hung in many a browning row ;
Odors of the apples roasting
Near the hearth-side's warming glow
Memory's grasp, though skies grow wider,
Years nor leagues shall not release.
Here's a toast, in their own cider,
To the gnarled old apple-trees.



THE MILKY WAY OF A SUMMER DAY.

II.

THE MEADOW.

“ ‘ Rich man, poor man, beggar man, thief,’
Which do you 'spose t'will be ?
‘ Doctor, lawyer, Indian chief,’
Oh, *he* will marry me.
There goes a butterfly, yellow and black,
Isn't he pretty, oh my !
Where is my hat ? Oh, here on my back.
Come on. We'll catch it. Let's try.
There ! It's flown off and over the wall.
Aren't you tired ? Let's rest.
We'll hide here where the grass is tall,
And play we are birds in a nest.
Ugh, there's a bug right down by my toe.
No, it's a cricket. I say,
Wont the men scold when they come here to mow,
Because we have trampled the hay.
Say, can you make such a loud squealy noise
With a blade of grass and your thumbs ?
I learned to do it from some of the boys.
This one, I tell you just hums.
I'm going to roll you over and over.
Now don't kick out your feet.
O, see, here is a four leaf clover ;
Who's the first boy I'll meet ? ”

.

Two little pinafores gypsy maids
Out in the meadow green,
Rollicking, romping, making raids,
Treasures of Summer to glean,
Astrologers gay in the warm mid-day
Of the star-flecked daisy field
Read fortunes bright by the rays of white
And the disks of the golden shield.
One by one as the petals fall
From their fingers brief caress
A fate is sealed beyond recall
To burden, or bear, or bless.
One for happiness, one for grief,
One for you and me,
“ Rich man, poor man, beggar man, thief,”
Which do you 'spose 'twill be.



III.

THE DEEP TANGLED WILDWOOD.

Cone-hung pine-tops gently swaying
High o'er pink arbutus gems ;
Red-barked birchlings, lithe, a-straying
From age-silvered parent stems ;
Soft-furred pussy willows sleeping,
Alder thickets, brake embossed,
All in kinship bound by creeping
Round-leafed green briar, emerald-glossed.

Here when Spring unwraps amid a
Sense-entrancing, perfumed gale,
Jack-in-pulpits prim consider
On the lilies of the vale ;
Stars of Bethlehem a-twinkling
In a green, moss-clouded sky,
Where a tiny brook goes tinkling,
And the ferns dwell, frail and shy.

Here the cat-bird's loud locution
Midst the sweet azalea's spray
Warns inquisitive intrusion
From its bowered nest away.

Here when evening drapes its umber
Bob Whites to the firs repair,
Sharing secrecy and slumber
With the silent-footed hare.

Here are berry bushes weighted
In late Summer's ripening hours ;
Twining grape-vines purple-freighted
High o'erhang the leafy showers ;
Acorns rattle from the white oak ;
All for Nature's little men ;—
Autumn's orchard to delight folk,
Dwellers of the glebe and glen.



IV.

PRISCILLA.

Sitting spinning in the gloaming of the quaint old long ago,
Hearts a-winning with the homing to thy cheeks of healthy
glow,

Maiden of the Pilgrim training, in fair Fancy's hall of art,
In no tints be-marred or waning, hangs thy picture all apart.
High above thee, herb-hung rafter, odorous of Summer fields,
Echoes back thy cheery laughter, when to mirth thy musing
yields;

Or, when through the open door-way, from thy distaff strays
thy glance,

Off upon a pensive foray, far away, mayhap, as France,
Though the forest shadows slanting, almost reach the oaken
sill,

And the plaintive call, enchanting, may not be the whip-
poor-will,

But a lurking Narragansett's signal to an ambushed foe,
Portent of a midnight transit o'er the settlement of woe,—
Though the darkness sifting slowly, in thy Puritanic creed,
May suggest the dark, unholy Superstition's demon breed,—
Naught of discontent or terror clouds or daunts thy vision
clear;

In thy generation's error, things unknown to fight or fear
Thine no share, but in the doing, ready hand and heart and
mind;

And the legend of thy wooing is the fable of thy kind.

Chaos, thy distaff flax-laden: Destiny wound on thy reel.

As I see thee, Plymouth maiden, sitting at thy spinning-wheel,
Thrills each nerve with new ambition, in a far connected
heart,

To preserve the high traditions of the past of which thou art.

"WHEN THE FROGS BEGIN TO PEEP."

Snows have melted in the shadows,
 Creek and pond to flood are swelled,
 Buds are tipping out the willows,
 Hill and vale no more are held
 In the bonds the frost-sprites weld.

Listen, hear the frogs a-peeping :
 Through the silence everywhere
 April showers of tinkling music
 Spattering o'er the twilight fair,
 Blurring all the evening air.

Like some olden fairy legend,
 Or the song that mother sung,
 Rings again to-night the vespers,
 As in days of yore they rung,—
 Days when you and I were young.

What is it, vague, and long-wished for
 That they stir in us again ?
 Things aspired, or dreams awakened,
 Though their trill has told since then
 Two score Springtimes, ay, and ten.

Once it meant the Spring of lifetime,
 Sent the warm young blood a-leaping :
 Now, 'tis stillness of life's twilight
 When we hear the frogs a-peeping,
 And we long for peaceful sleeping.



A WELL WORN PATH IN A WOODLAND WAY.

VI.

LADIES' SLIPPERS.

Aha, now I shall marry thee,
My darling Cinderella.
Fair fortune has been kind to me,
And guides my wistful eyes to see
The prize of which I tell her.

Beside this sparkling spring, so clear,
Just where I kneel to sip a
Refreshing draught of nectar dear,
(Now who'd have thought to find it here?)
I spy my lady's slipper.

Beneath the leaves, by sun scarce lit,
Upon the wood-floor's level,—
A scene for elfin dancers fit,—
Some fairy must have stolen it
To hold a midnight revel.

A dream of pink, of silken sheen,
With nicest taste displayed in
Gay little bows of fluttering green;
(Was prettier slipper ever seen
Upon the foot of maiden?).

As finely veined as the dear feet
From which it has been missing;
Almost as shapely and petite,—
In fact, withal so very sweet
I can't refrain from kissing.

I'll quickly to my sweetheart bring
This slipper meet for Venus—
'Twill fit her like a wedding ring,
I'll marry her this very Spring,
And none shall come between us.

VII.

BOYHOOD.

The eyes of night shed kindly light
 Upon his little curly head,
And darkness teems with pleasant dreams,
 Tucked safe and snug within his bed.
The eyes of day smile on his play
 And read for him a fortune bright ;
Sweet innocence his heart doth fence,
 As theirs of gold are hedged with white.

The birds and bees, the rustling trees,
 Are his alone, to have and hold :
No narrow bounds the land surrounds
 Where reigns this merry monarch bold.
His firm belief (but, oh, how brief)
 That all the joys with which he knows
The world doth brim, shall on for him
 Forever, as the river flows.

In all his air no cloud of care
 Shuts out his sun of happiness,
And chilling grief can blast no leaf
 His life's young Springtime comes to bless.
Blithesome and glad, the little lad,
 For watches ever at his side
An unseen charm, an unfelt arm,—
 A mother's love, a father's pride.

Soon grief and pain shall fall like rain,
 And sorrows overwhelm him thick and fast,
And he shall yearn for the return
 Of sunny days so long, long passed.
In many years, with bitter tears,
 The lad shall learn at what a cost,
What tender care, how deep a prayer,
 They guarded him who now are lost.



"SOME MOSSY BANK MY COUCH MUST BE."

VIII.

DANDELIONS.


Bright suns of April, glitt'ring in the green,
Thick-star the emerald firmament to-day.
To-morrow gleams with disks of silvery sheen ;—
The suns of April are the moons of May.

IX.

THE REDWING'S NEST.

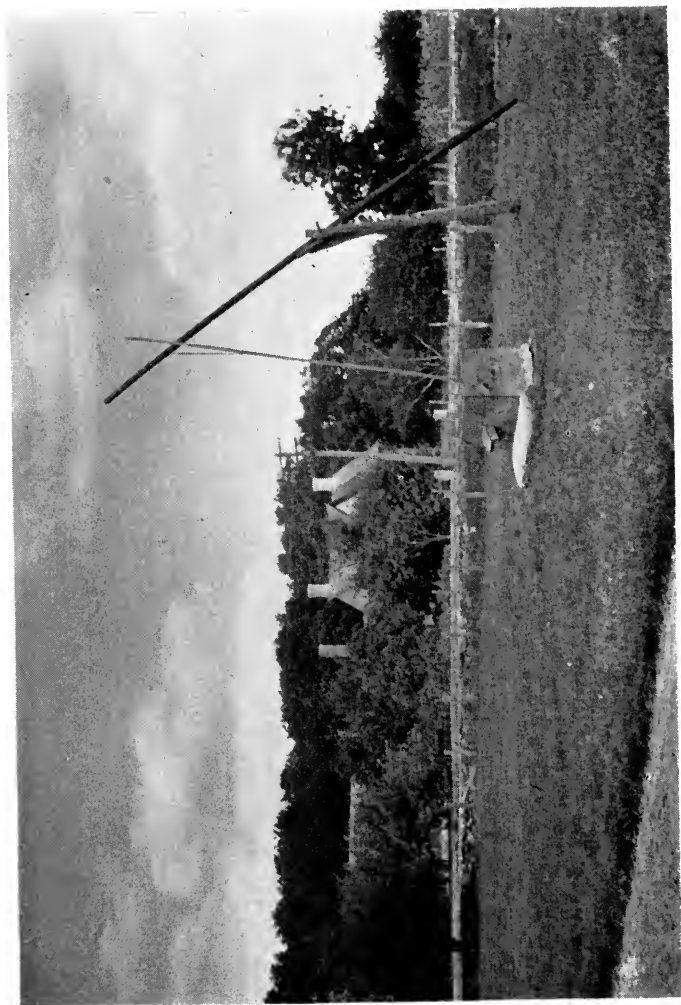
Near where the muskrat rears his dome
And cat-tails lance the mere,
The redwing builds her basket home
Of grass and sedges sere,
And warbles from the swaying reed
All through a summer's day
Her bell-toned note, her only creed,
So happy and so gay.

Though frail the lace-work structure's art,
And strong the rustling gales,
And though more fateful light'nings dart
Above its willow pales
Than ruby wing's red flashing line
From raven cloud disband,
She dwelleth safe in her design,
The hollow of his hand.



Oh, ye, who build a mansion great,
Set high upon a hill,
And pride ye on your high estate,
And plume ye as ye will,
Are ye as happy as the bird
That builds beside the mere?
For I have surely never heard
Your praise so sweet and clear.

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THE OLD OAKEN BUCKET.

X.

APPLE BLOSSOMS.

At Mid-May noon the old trees bask and doze
Soothed by the toiling bees' low droning hum,
And visions of long vanished Winter snows
To their pleased dreaming fancy softly come,
Yet half awake, stirred by a passing breeze,
That melts their fluttering snow-flakes, one by one,
They stretch and sigh, and then as dreamland flees
Blush at the ardent wooing of the sun.

XI.

WHEN GRANDFATHER SWORE.

When I dug up his garden to see the seeds start,
And then told him they hadn't, with innocent heart,—
When they fired on the Flag and Fort Sumter's brave band,
Then my grandfather swore, and swore loudly,
 “ Good Land ! ”

When the bank which had held his small earnings in trust
Closed its doors and the papers reported it “ bust,”—
And the year the potato bug plague was upon us,
In the heat of the moment he said, “ Mercy on us ! ”

And once when the point of his scythe ploughed the
 loam,—

And once when the Great Reaper's sickle struck home,
Unmanned by the shock of the sudden despair,
I heard,—heard him say,—blame him not,—“ I declare ! ”

But his oaths were all sadly repented in prayer
And the things that he swore at would make most men
 swear,

So I feel that the Angels who make it their care,
Will lightly record it against him Up There.



A WINDING ROAD THAT ARCHED A WINDING STREAM.

XII.

THE BAY PATH'S END.

The snake-like trail, o'er hill, through dale,
Winds to a mound beside the sea
O'er which the white-winged Gods shall sail
From their far land of mystery.

.

Here clustered wigwams thinly smoked
'Mid fields of undulating maize,
And here the arrow-maker chipped,
In those last neolithic days,
The flakes of milk-white quartz to shape
Keen-edged and barbed, for chase or fight,—
To stain with Narragansett blood,
Or stop the wild-goose in its flight.
Here Wampanoag wampum strung,
Carved from the blue-eyed quahog shell,
Or framed the birch-bark's graceful curves
To cleave the broad Atlantic swell.
The warrior bent the tough oak bow
With tight-stretched vibrant deerskin string,
Or decked the scalp-lock with the plumes
Far-borrowed from the eagle's wing.

With harsh-hued war-paint on his face,
 Dug from the shore-side beds of clay,
 A wild, fierce silhouette he made
 Upon the headland of the Bay.
 Here Massasoit saw unmoved,
 The Pale-face paddle to his shore ;
 Here met the Little Captain bold,
 And smoked the peace-pipe o'er and o'er.
 Here where still from the white sand floor
 The crystal waters bubbling burst,
 The hunted Philip knelt one day
 Within the wood to quench his thirst.

 To-day no signal reads the ear
 In fish-hawk's cry or night-owl's screech ;
 The Red-man's spirit stalks unseen
 In moonlight eves beside the beach.

 Long sleep to warrior and long dreams,
 A Happy Hunting in the West,
 A swift canoe o'er pleasant streams,
 And here a peaceful Place of Rest.



AND WHEN THE SHADOWS SOFTLY WEAVE.

XIII.

THE MILKMAID.

She's graceful as the timid fawn
As light she trips across the lawn,
 With milk-pail swinging,
 Blithely singing,
In the glow of early dawn.

The whole day long you'll hear her song,
The kitchen's humble crafts among,—
 The happy fairy
 Of the dairy,
Ignorant of ruth or wrong.

And when the shadows softly weave
Their web about the dewy eve,
 And day is weary,
 Listen, cheery
As a wood-bird can conceive

There comes the fading fields across,
Clear-ringing from the echo's toss,
 The rising, falling,
 Coaxing, calling,
“ Boss, co-boss, co-boss, co-boss.”

A barnyard fragrant with new hay,
A milking-stool, three-legged and gray,
 And seated on it,
 With her bonnet
Tossed from rippling curls away,

With cheek against the moolie's side,
With face half-turned and laughing-eyed,
 She draws the tinkling,
 Splashing, sprinkling,
Frothy, foaming, snowy tide.

So here's a toast we will not pass,
Come, drink and drain the milk-brimmed glass,
 Unto this healthy,
 Wise and wealthy,
Early rising country lass.



XIV.

THE CATACOMBS.

Through long, dim corridors whose shadows throw
An added gloom upon the pillared stone
Where vault on vault enwraps the crumbling bone,
The mummied form, or cell of hidden woe,
Soft-treading, belted forms flit to and fro,
Or chant in half-hushed dreary monotone
That haunts the hearer with its ceaseless drone,
A hymn to labor, as they come and go.

.

No dark and dismal caverned chambers these,
Beneath the ancient walls of harassed Rome,
But white-rowed domes beneath the apple-trees,
Among whose blossoms, showered like breeze-tossed
foam,
The steady buzzing of the busy bees
Betokens hoards of amber honey-comb.

XV.

FAITHFULNESS.

Time heals all wounds ; great sorrows dim ;
The poignancy of Death is dulled ;
The tears which erst o'erflowed the brim
Are dried ; the heart's keen pangs are lulled.
Yet I would bear the throes of grief,—
Would suffer for a love long lost,
Forever, than court sooth relief,—
A *moment's* peace,—at Memory's cost ;
Than feel Oblivion's soft caress,
Betrayed to base Forgetfulness.



THE ORIOLE SWINGS FROM ITS LEAF-TIPPED BRANCH.

XVI.

AN AIR CASTLE.

A day-dream scarcely builds so slight
A structure o'er in Spain,
Or chooses such an airy site
For its idyllic reign,
As that half hidden by the elm's
Wide-drooping, bowered retreat,
High up among the leafy realms
That arch the village street.

The golden light of sunset skies
And blackness of the night,
Their offspring cradle in this wise,—
Hence take their fledgling flight,
And who below a-watching but
With wonder would declare
A Phoenix flown from Lilliput
Had built a home up there.

A half-way house 'tween heaven and earth,
Where spirit with spirit communes
In bird-song, gay with gladsome mirth,
And sweet aeolian tunes.
Should St. Cecilia from her dais
Flit down on earthborn quest,
She well might choose as trysting-place
The oriole's hanging nest.

XVII.

BEAUTIFUL MOONLIGHT.

Yest're'en I walked in the white moonlight
 With you, dear, at my side,
With your hand's caress on my arm, so light,
And your eyes aglow like the stars of night
 That gleamed in the heavens wide.

And the low, sweet tones that your lips did please
 To wreathe with your kindly smiles,
Like the murmured words of the cooling breeze
To the list'ning ears of the eager trees,
 Stirred all my heart's dark aisles.

My eyes on you were as stars above ;
 My ears as the myriad leaves ;
And the heart you felt the fierce beating of
Enwrapped you and held you, my darling, my love,
 As the moonlight the world inweaves.

Oh, the tender thrill of your presence there !
 Oh, eve that hath flown too soon !
Though the days that come are gloomy and bare,
A vision will visit my sadness whene'er
 Shines the light of the magic moon.

XVIII.

THE HAY-MAKERS.

Who was it in the Springtime trilled
A song that all the grass-blades thrilled,
And made them yearn to reach and grow
Up to the joys he lauded so ?

You know, I think ;
'Twas Bob-o-link.

Who was it in the evening still,
Down in the mead, or on the hill,
With never a desire to shirk,
Would whet the scythe for morrow's work,
With whip-poor-will,
Poor-whip-poor-will ?

Who was it that with shrewd cocked eye,
Observing dark-piled cumuli,
The thunder-shower prophesied ?
The Quail it was who loudly cried,
Make haste ! More yet !
More wet ! More wet !

And so the men with fork and rake
Full many a rounded cock did make,
While homeward rolled each dome-like load,
Within the barn-mow to be stowed,
Where an old Owl, white-barred and gray,
Hoots, "I—too helped—to make—the hay."

XIX.

THE HEART OF SUMMER.

The heart of Midsummer is beating with mine ;
Her love told in whispers,—the breath of the pine,
Each nod of the daisies, each curve of a vine,
 Confesses the secret to me,
As resting upon her fair bosom I lie,
Apart from the world, beneath the blue sky,
And watch the foam-clouds like great bergs floating by
 Over an aerial sea.

Bejewelled with lilies of workmanship rare,
A garland of sweetest wild rose in her hair,—
So fair my enchantress beyond all compare,
 Each glance that she grants is a boon.
The air smiles and laughs with the sunshine and birds,
The earth tones a harmony grander than words,
The sky its true symbol of constancy girds
 Around us the long afternoon.

The fragrance of countless sweet blossoming things
Each stir of her vesture enchantingly flings
About me, the while the gay bobolink sings
 Of all her voluptuous charms ;
Then softer she croons,—in the hum of the bees,
The rustle of grasses, the swaying of trees,
Warm air waves, enwrapping with glamour the breeze,
 And lulls me to sleep in her arms.



WHERE PICKEREL LURK BELOW THE BRIDGE.

XX.

RED RASPBERRIES.

In the thicket down back of the garden,
Where the raspberries flourish and spread,
We were picking a dishful for dinner
Of the ripest, most luscious and red.
The bees discontentedly grumbled,
Interrupted in nectarine sips,
While the briars, ungracious and surly,
At our garments gave sharp, vicious nips.

But a danger more dread than the dagger
Of fuming, infuriate bee ;
More sure than the briar's stiletto,
Was lurking in there for me.
For Cupid that day was out hunting,
His bow, it was shaped like her lips,
And the shaft in my bosom he buried
Was one of his love-poisoned tips.

You know them, those great puckered berries,
Like thimbles of ruby embossed ;
Those musk-flavored globules of sweetness,
That epicures' praises exhaust,

You know how a blush of pure pleasure
Flashes even the trained finger-tips,
And only a sequence of color
Protects from betrayal the lips.

And you'll understand how it happened,
When a thorn in her white, dimpled arm
Caused her rose-tinted lips to pucker
With a quick little cry of alarm,
That I should mistake, in my flurry
(The wisest will make just such slips),
For the sweetest and ripest of berries,
Her own fair, deceiving, sweet lips.

The stain, it was not of the juices
Of berries that tinted her cheek ;
The glow that o'erspread my horizon
Was not their reflection unique.
Perhaps it was twice that it happened,
I wouldn't say how many trips ;
And kisses are like the red raspberries,—
They are never betrayed by her lips.



XXI.

WADIN'.

I say, wont you quit your gappin';
 Nothin's the matter, you fool.
Haint nothin' great goin' to happen
 'F a feller plays hookey from school.

Been down to the frog-pond, wadin':
 Bet you wish't you was along.
Water was bully 'n we staid in
 Till we heard the supper bell dong.

Caught a whole hatful of skaters :
 Wasn't they kickin', oh my.
Spotted the frogs with pertaters,
 'N soaked one right in the eye.

D'ye ev' have a mud-turtle grab you,
 Grab right hold of your heel?
Just wait till you have one nab you ;
 Maybe I didn't squeal.

Don't it feel good to wiggle
 Your toes way down in the mud ;
Guess 'twould a made you giggle
 When Jackie set down with a thud.

Lots of pollywogs wogglin'
An' squirmen' around your toes ;
Jackie an' me got to jogglin'
An' spattered up orful our clo'es.

Found some sweet flag-root growin'
Over'n the edge of the wood.
Had to wade deep when we's goin'—
Pants rolled up high as we could.

Wasn't it fun, oh, crackee.
Water was bully an' warm.
But that little sneak of a Jackie
Had to go home and tell mom.

Bet I will give *him* a lickin';
Whoppers all went up the spout.
Ma aint so green as a chicken ;
Stockin's was on wrong-side out.



XXII.

IN HAYING TIME.

Meadow-larks make mellow warbling,
Quails are whistling in the wheat,
When across the fields of morning,
Comes afar and faint the beat
Of the rhythmic mower clicking,
Clicking, clicking, clicking slow,
As the swaths, waist high and luscious,
Fall in many a rippling row.

Foot by foot the tide that billowed
At its flood at matin song,
White-capped by the ox-eyed daisies,
Fast recedes the forenoon long,
Till its ebb leaves only lapping
Long, low breakers sweeping o'er
All the flats, and stubble-pebbled
Reaches of the meadow floor.

XXIII.

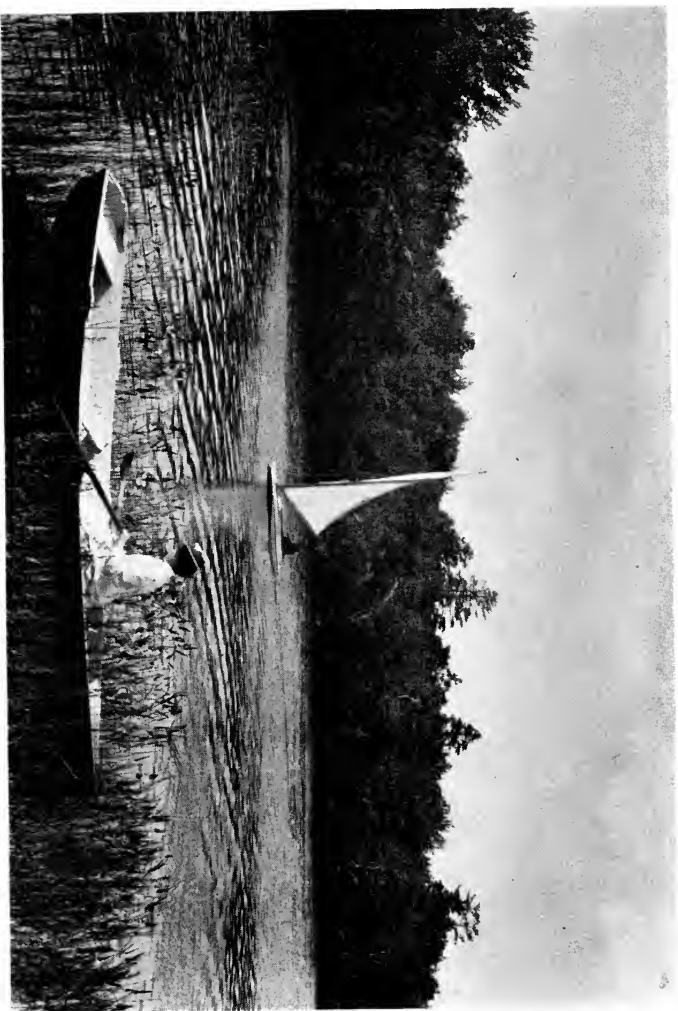
SYLVAN WILDS.

Encircled by a forest no woodman's axe hath marred,
There lies a fairy lakelet, its bosom lily-starred ;
Protected and secluded by odorous monarch pines,
Whose whisperings only, stir it in rippling, shim'ring
lines.

Its clear, bright face reflecting the twinkling stars
of night,
What fleecy clouds of noonday pass o'er it in their
flight,
And pines, whose shade extending beyond the bluffs
that rise,
Form scenes of sylvan beauty too rare for common eyes.

The alder bushes woo it along the Southern shore ;
A motionless kingfisher keeps watch and warden o'er
The troutlets that are sporting down in a shady deep,
Beneath the stump he rests on, whereon rare mosses
creep.

Down in its crystal waters a lazy pick'rel glides,
Or watching some rash insect, a bass in waiting hides,
With fins and tail slow fanning, beneath the water
weeds,
Till, flash—and splash,—and ripples go circling toward
the reeds.



JUST THE WOODS AND WATER, AND YOU AND I.

In sun-kissed, reed-fringed baylets sweet lilies scent
the air,
Tame water-fowl reposing, fear no intruder there,
Of all life's fragrant mem'ries, count this among the
first,
To kneel and kiss those waters, to quench the noon-
day thirst.

And after freely feasting from rich-stored blackb'ry
vines,
To lay upon the needles beneath the murmuring pines,
And listen to the music Aeolus lightly plays,
Beside the fairy lakelet, in lazy Summer days.

And in the rough bark cabin to sleep 'neath fairy spell,
Soothed by the peaceful silence and whip-poor-will's
"Rest well;"
Alone ;—alone with Nature, breathing in health and
rest,
Feeling the breadth of freedom, there by the fair
lake's breast.



XXIV.

INDIAN CORN.

Up o'er the hill long files of warrior hosts
Move with the silent stealth of midday ghosts.
The rustlings only of their buckskin dress
To keenest ear their onward sweep confess :
But startled eye, across the landscape sees
Ten thousand plumes a-nodding in the breeze,
And gleams of sunshine flicker everywhere,
Reflected from long tufts of golden hair,
That once fair Saxon maidens might have graced,
But dangle now from each fierce foeman's waist ;
A band of warriors of the tribe of Maize,
With scalps at belt, from one of their forays
Returning down the Vale of Genesee,
To celebrate the feast of Victory.

XXV.

THE MOWERS' SONG.

Through the long midsummer day,
Where the meadows stretch away,
Men are out a-making hay.
 Hear the scythe sing merrily,
 Ker-wink, ker-wee, ker-wink, ker-wee.
Up and down the whole broad farm,
Bended back and bared brown arm
Swing the blade that works the charm,
 Then beneath the maple tree,
 Ker-wink, ker-wee, ker-wink, ker-wee
Rings the stone against the steel ;
'Long its length the fingers feel
If the edge from point to heel
 Keen for the clean cutting be ;
 Ker-wink, ker-wee, ker-wink, ker-wee.
Down the hill come Jack and Jill
With the pail they did not spill,
Thirsty mouths with cheer to fill ;
 After they have had their drink,
 Ker-wee, ker-wink, ker-wee, ker-wink,
With a wisp they wipe the blade,
With a sweep the circuit 's made,
With a swish the grass is laid,
 In long windrows down the lea ;
 Ker-wink, ker-wee, ker-wink, ker-wee,
Step by step the mowers go,
Rythmic to the swaths laid low,
Towards the sunset's reddening glow,
 Till the day's-end wearily
 Stills the last ker-wink, ker-wee.

XXVI.

THE BUMBLE BEE.

That's a lusty, roistering fellow,
He tricked out in jerkin yellow
And black velvet breeches, gay
As a lord in court array,
And he carries, with a swagger,
'Neath his belt, a ready dagger.
He's the terror and the pride
Of one half the country side,
With his daring mid-day raids
And his drunken escapades.
You may meet him by the river
Where his gruff "Stand and deliver!"
Floating forth upon the breeze,
Frights the pale anemones
While he borrows, willy-nilly
A year's income from a lily,
Or relieves, with reverence, e'en
Jack-in-pulpit of his "green."
By his brazen boldness bent
Clover gives up every scent,
And the wild rose furious flushes,
Flooding face and breast with blushes
When this gallant cut-throat curses,
Never robs he ladies' purses,

But his tribute sweetly sips
From the fair ones' pretty lips,
Then with cap a-rake and chuckle
He holds up a honeysuckle,
Takes his toll with boast and bluster
From a rich azalea cluster
And receives with greatest pleasure
All a strawberry blossom's treasure :
Fills his pockets with the gold
In which formerly had rolled
Those young Dives, dandelions,
Solomon's own worthy scions.
When he's rifled all he cares,
Back he comes with boisterous airs,
Roaring forth a rousing ballad,
Swearing these his days of salad,
To the tavern where he sups,
Drinks a dozen buttercups
To the fortunes of the road
Till he's tipsy as a toad,
Then he mounts the board, this clown,
('Tis an oak-leaf, sere and brown)
And drawls out a drinking song,
Arrant rogue as e'er went wrong,
And when he has tried each label
Goes to sleep beneath the table.
Here's a cup of nectar, then,
To the king of highwaymen.

XXVII.

SHALL WE FORGET ?

Shut from the sunlight and the open air,
Toward which each heart-throb leaps,—each
instinct yearns,
Old Alpha Beta chant we in our turns,
Or o'er the Gallic Commentaries glare ;
Or in tiered cells of brick, dim-eyed we stare
At Arab hieroglyphs till fever burns ;
In crowded factory the frail form learns
The Shuttle's dreary song,—the Steam's hoarse blare.

.

Shall we forget the old humanities
In Ages' lapse,—the language of the trees,—
The wind's wild speech,—the ocean's sounding
hymn ?
To Nature's symbols fair our eyes grow dim ?
And deaf our ears to all the choral throng,—
The blithe bird's note,—the brook's sweet purling
song ?



SHALL WE FORGET?

XXVIII.

IN MEMORIAM.

Come, Memory, let us sit beside the blaze ;
Hark to the wind outside : 'tis fearful weather ;
It's long since we have had a talk together ;
I've been so busy, and so swift the days.
I know why you have called to-night. A place
Is vacant, and I need not ask you whether
You see again the ring upon the heather,
Whose merriest link was her fair, laughing face.
'Twas long ago ; the boys and girls will grieve :
And you must call upon them all this eve ;
There's one who stood a friendship's every test,
And one who dearer was than all the rest ;
Give them, what I would fain bear in your stead,
My message, with the message of the dead.

XXIX.

THE CRY TO THE SEA.

A breeze from the sea blew over the marshes,
The cry of a gull skirled harsh on the ear,
The sound of the waves on the rocks was swelling
And the smell of the spray was as salt as a tear.

A lad looked off with a gaze of yearning,
Afar o'er the seaweed wall that lies on
The ridge that shuts out the sea from the meadows,
And far away to the blue horizon.

“ Oh if I only were free, were free,
Free as the gulls to fly away,
Seeking a fortune over the sea,
I would away to-day, to-day.”

He leaned on his scythe as one lightly dreaming,
Nor turned to glance where the sea-wind blows,
Where the bushes creep to the marsh's limit,
Where the tufted sedge and the cranberry grows.

The salt grass swathed in the thin-laid winrows
Or unmown, bowed to the wind's own will,
The taste of the tide holds fast in its veinlets
But the lad was steeped in it stronger still.

“ Would I were free as the breeze that blows
Over the billows, tossing foam,
Far and wide as the sunbeam goes,
Over the wide world I would roam.”

.

Under a sun that knows no mercy
Off in the utmost bounds of earth,
A traveler lay in the waste of fever
With a paler face than that land gives birth.

The air was stifling with scent of spices,
The wavelets lapped on a coral reef
And the haggard man who was gazing seaward
Knew that his time was very brief.

Listen ! What is that moan so weak ?
What is the wish breathed forth in the sigh ?
What does the heart's last drop so seek ?
“ Oh, could I only go home to die ! ”



XXX.

BEYOND THE KNOWN.

They come not back again to bring us news,
Who pass the barriers of that country fair,
Where Fancy wanders pleasantly ; of where
The Summer breeze sings low as wood-dove coos,
And Silence is its own appointed muse.

Where dreams do dwell ; where souls do yearn
in prayer

To be ; from whence, as on the twilight air
Sweet perfume floats, fond longing idly woos.
That land they call, who are not bound by ties
Of close relationship, Illusion ; those

Who know and love it well, the Blest Ideal.
The hint of which in all true poetry lies ;
The Heaven toward which each human life-
plant grows

From out its darkened earth-cell of the Real.



WHEN SUMMER DAYS SLEEP IN A HAZE.

XXXI.

IN BERRY TIME.

When Summer days sleep in a haze
Of sunlight, warm and mellow,
And Autumn's dawn is shedding on
The leaves a glow of yellow,
With pails a-swing, down past the spring,
Where willow wands hang drooping,
With catbird call,—with leap and fall,
A merry band goes trooping.
No slightest breeze strays through the trees
Where harvest-flies are ticking,
And bird-songs hush, for e'en the thrush
Is off for berry-picking.
A wood-path's shade leads to the glade
By many a zigzag turning
Where bushes low have long ago
O'erspread an ancient burning,
And set a feast which e'en the least
May share in bounteous measure,
Well fit to lure an epicure
From artificial pleasure.

Swift fingers loot the luscious fruit
 Beneath the leaves a-twinkling,
And pour a stream of jet-black cream
 Into the pails a-tinkling.
The bacchant bee drones noisily
 Home from his nectar-drinking,
And all too soon an afternoon
 Tips westward and is sinking.
With lips a-stain, home through the lane
 A barefoot group comes creeping,
With briar's brand and faces tanned
 And pails filled up to heaping.

Fair days appear in youth's bright year
 Where Memory goes a-tricking,
But o'er the rest those days seem blest
 When came the berry-picking.



XXXII.

INDIAN PIPE.

Gone are the savage days lang syne,
When harsher than the roar of flood,
Or prowling wild-cat's hungry whine,
The war-whoop chilled the settler's blood.
In unknown graves in field or glen,
Where once they roamed in beast-lent garb,
Beside this vanished race of men,
Lay tomahawk and flint-hewn barb.
But ponderers o'er the days of yore
May, as a sign, beneath the trees,—
On forest glade's great wigwam floor,—
Still see the warrior's pipe of peace.

XXXIII.

HIS DAILY BREAD.

The wild azalea's early fruit ;
The tendrils of the grape's new shoot ;
From marshy nook beside the brook
The puck'ring sweet flag's jointed root.

Wild strawberries' rich, lip-staining wine ;
The rounded leaf of greenbriar vine ;
Nor scorns to share the squirrels' fare,—
The guarded cone-seed of the pine.

Bark from the yellow birch's twig ;
The bud and leaf of sassafras sprig ;
And 'neath the mould, more prized than gold,
Its spicy root he deigns to dig.

The ruby drops of wintergreen ;
Its tender sprouts of reddened sheen,
That garnish glen and dale and fen,
He and the jay and partridge glean.

And berries,—rasp, and blue, and black ;
I' faith, there never yet was lack
Of treasure store, the country o'er,
For bird and beast and Boy to sack.

The bitter bayberry's pellets gray ;
The wild grape's royal purples pay
From year to year, a tribute dear
Through the dominions of his sway.

Gray marbled root of fronded brake ;
Wild cranberries from near the lake ;
An apple-tree invites his glee,
A trespass and a forfeit shake.

The acorn from its graven vase ;
The hazelnut with auburn face ;
The walnut eke, when missiles seek,
Descends to him from its high place.

'Tis thus His Majesty is fed,—
That Nature grants his daily bread,—
Nor doth his heart spurn works of art,
For when the Boy is safe in bed

And sleeps, he dreams that when he dies,
He'll find up there above the skies,
Amid enough of other stuff,
A jolly lot of pumpkin pies.



XXXIV.

THE ABANDONED FARM.

The farmhouse old hath long been mould,
On the sunken stoop the black snake crawls,
And the raspberry bramble at will doth ramble
And cover the scar of the cellar walls.
The hewers and hoers long since are dead,
The living are sundered and scattered and fled,
Hushed is the clatter and clang of men ;
From the bearded oak a crow doth croak,
And the wildwood claimeth its own again.
The rail fence crumbles, the stone wall tumbles,
And ivy and woodbine wreathes and wind,
And wrap in a sheen of scarlet and green
The prison chains that the fields confined.
And that tiny mite of an auburn sprite,
The chipmunk, hoards his harvest therein,
And plays in peace where the forest trees
Shadow and sunlight weave and spin.
The sumach's maze is fanned to a blaze,
The wild grass rustles and waves and croons,
And the oak leaves sigh at the passing by
Of a cloud o'er the calm of the August noons.
There hums a tune,—an old, old tune,
Through the fragrant fret of the murmuring pines,
Where the gray squirrel frisks and frolics and whisks,
Or under the needles for treasure mines.

The fluffy flock doth hide from the hawk
At the warning cry of the partridge cock
Where the blackberry-vine doth intertwine
And the mullein and milkweed interlock.
A russet, gnarled and moss-ensnarled
Hath wandered back to his forest kin,
But finds no friend to cheer his end,
And the apples are sour and hardy and thin ;
The woodpecker's mark is hewn in its bark,
And graven deep in each dying bough,
And a hoot-owl basks in its bole and asks,
In the dusk of evening. " Who? " and " How? "
With prying approach and cunning encroach
The wood revenges the woodman's axe,
And silent and slow creeps on its foe
Till the clearing is lost in its wildered tracks.
To her compact true, when the note falls due,
Nature forecloses her mortgage of old,
And man hath freed by a quitclaim deed
All right and title to have and hold.
With her hand and seal, beyond repeal,
By another lease she doth entail
To bird and bee, to bush and tree,
To fox and squirrel and coon and quail.
There are tenants now who will prune and plough,
Who will guard and garner with tireless arm,
And give such cheer to the farer here
As never before on the old Bolles farm.

XXXV.

THE KINGFISHER.

Afar, in solitude, in state like one,
 Kingly survivor of a proud, lost race,
 Sits the great sachem in his lofty place,
As motionless as the dry branch, his throne ;
His feathered scalp-lock fiercely outlined,—stone ;
 The war-paint, red and blue, on breast and face ;
 But through the wilderness with silent pace
No file of warriors creep. He is alone.
Beneath, the eddying current rushes by
 Between black alder, brake, and berry spray.
Through its cool depths his swift spear-head doth fly
 With sudden, cunning aim at troutlet prey ;
Then, restless, tired of peace, with harsh war-cry
 He wakes the echoing wood, and steals away.



THE ECHOING WOOD.

XXXVI.

THE VILLAGE IN THE PINES.

Nestled in a sunny bay
Of the woodland's winding way,
Lies a lonely little village, strewn with cones :
O'er its lanes the pine trees shed
Carpets silent to the tread,
And the robins flit above moss-cushioned stones.

They who dwell within its bounds,
Quietly beneath the mounds,
Never care to pass beyond its walled extremes.
'Tis the homeland of the Blest,
'Tis the village of Long Rest,
And of peaceful sleep and unawakened dreams.

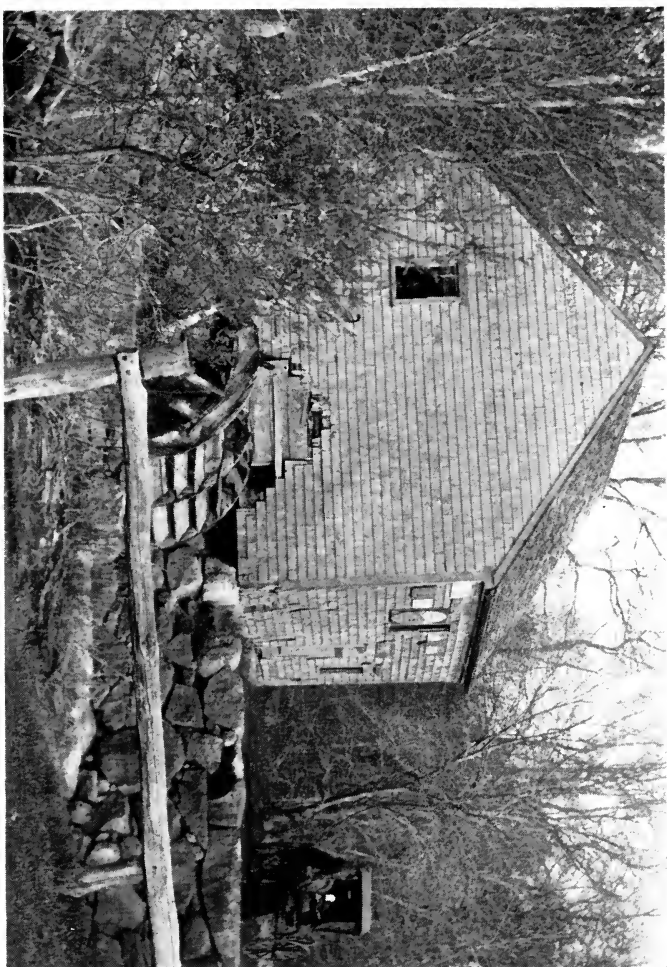
Slanted marbles mark the miles
Of their journey otherwhiles,
E'en beyond the distant bourne of four-score years.
Graven granite, scarred by Time,
Tells with many a pious rhyme
How they fared along the weary vale of tears.

If you choose to wander here
In the Springtime of the year,
You will find the green with myrtle all arrayed.
Here the fragile moss-pink spreads
By the sleepers' humble beds,
And the violets' sweet faces cheer the shade.

In the warm still afternoon
You may hear the pine-tops croon
A low melody that thrills some long-lost chord ;
'Tis the tale of weal and woe
Lived so long and long ago
By the folks who sleep beneath the blossomed sward.

Sometime when our wand'rings cease
And our spirit finds release,
To our fathers gathered, as the law divines,
We will sleep the long, long sleep,
Where the moss and myrtle creep,
In the peaceful little village 'neath the pines.





THE WHEEL THAT NEVER TURNS AGAIN.

XXXVII.

OLD FASHIONED THINGS.

“ Old times, old friends, old wine.” What dim desires
 Awake! What pride, what vain regret there rings,
 When Memory strikes these chords upon the strings
Tense-drawn across the heart of human lyres.
To-day may reverent homage pay its sires,
 But never feel the thrill their music brings,
 And all the other good old-fashioned things,
That light anew the heart’s low smouldering fires.
The way they used to do when we were young :
 The tales our fathers told, the well-sweep high
From which the moss-grown oaken bucket hung,
 The blazing back-log’s hospitality,
The spinning wheel, the songs our mother sung,
 The worn blue China plates,—and you and I.

XXXVIII.

“THE MAIDEN.”

Beneath the Harvest Moon a Maiden dreams.
Persephone, fair Ceres' fair-haired child,
Whose wealth of golden tresses, flowing wild
In the mild moonlight, shed strange, darting gleams.
What dreams? Of Springtime's laughter-loving streams :
Of fields of green and breezes undefiled,
When with young June were pleasant hours beguiled,
E're led astray by Pluto's amorous schemes.
Alone, forsaken now, in sad unrest,
She clasps the sheaf and sickle to her breast ;
Her day of happiness seems now so brief,
So near the harsh, cold days of bitter grief.
Dreaming, she sings a soft-toned lullaby,
Then shivers and breathes forth a long, low sigh.



GOD'S FIRST AND SECOND TEMPLES.

XXXIX.

GOLDEN-ROD.

The Autumn is the twilight of the year ;
 Upon the fruits of Summer's toil we sup,
Then rest contented, and with fund of cheer
 Slow sip the vintage from a brimming cup.

As creep the darkening shadows o'er the lawn,
 Foretelling Winter's night-time, still, serene,
The sun a thousand torches breathes upon
 And, lo, they spring in flame, to light the scene.

They flood with radiance all the Autumn eves,
 And holy incense offer up to God,
Till Winter's page, the Wind, blows out and leaves
 Us all to dream. So dies the Golden-rod.

XI.

NEW ENGLAND.

The siren call of Summer Isles
May lure the fickle feet astray ;
Our hearts shall beat, despite their wiles
Across ten thousand desert miles,
As waves beat on thy cape and bay.

Let tropic suns smile on soft ease,
Where Lust and Languor dull recline ;
Thy call is heard far over seas,
Thy message sent on every breeze ;
We name Thee ours but we are Thine.

No less than genial, smiling June,
Thy blustering East wind thrills and warms ;
The witch-like music of its rune
Sets tingling nerves all in attune
With Spirit of the Winter storms.

Oh, headland bold and rock-strewn shore !
Billow and breaker on the beach !
What courage brewed in thy uproar,
What energy earned from the oar,
What loyal hearts thy trials teach.

Oh, granite hills that greet the sky !
Oh, forests of the whispering pine !
Oh, lakes, Oh, rivers running by !
Who dwells beside thee but shall try
His utmost powers toward the divine ?

With Energy bred in Thine air,
Endurance, from Thy Winter's blast,
Ambition, from thy Mother's prayer,
Rash he, indeed, who shall declare
The Great Ones gone, shall be our last.



LOVER'S BRIDGE.

XLI.

JACK FROST'S RETOUCHING.

With criticizing air of connoisseur
He views the verdant landscape Summer left,
And seizing brush, with strokes as swift and deft
As master-brain was ever wont to spur,
He whitens all the foreground and the fir,—
Daubs red and gold the maple leaves sharp-cleft,—
Paints yellow all the sheaves harvest-bereft,
And browns the grape-vine garb and walnut burr.
A touch, a dash, with artful skill applied :
And ever quick the slightest fault to seek,
He scans with eye not wholly satisfied
The maiden Autumn, too demure and meek :
Then with a careful hand and full of pride
He tints a rosier glow upon her cheek.

XLII.

THE LITTLE BROWN HOUSE ON THE HILL.

Far away from the smoke
That the pure air doth choke,
And the noise that doth peacefulness kill,
Where the road winds between
Fair pastures of green,
Stands a little brown house on a hill.

Mansions great and stone-built,
And embellished with gilt,
May the pride of the moment fulfil,
But the heart will hark back
When the nerve strings are slack
To that little brown house on the hill.

By the shaky old stile
Simple daisies still smile,
And the yarrow creeps close to it still,
But no smoke's floating South
From the chimney's broad mouth
Of the little brown house on the hill.

Near the straight garden walk
Grows the tall hollyhock,
And the lilac blooms fragrance distil,
But there rings forth no horn
And the life is all gone
From the little brown house on the hill.



AND THE WIND WHISTLES BITTER AND CHILL.

There's a creak to the door,
And a bare oaken floor
When once you have passed the worn sill,
And the feet it once pressed,
They have long been at rest
By the meeting-house over the hill.

Underneath the well-sweep
Where the green mosses creep,
Lies the water as clear and as still
As when feet long ago
Pattered slow to and fro
With the buckets to empty and fill.

In the meadows the cows
In the Summer still browse :
Down the hillside tink, tinkles the rill :
And the robins still sing
From their apple-tree swing,
And the bob-o-links twitter and trill.

And when bare branches show
'Gainst the sunset's red glow,
And the wind whistles bitter and chill,
Then the snow blanket weaves,
And tucks warm to the eaves
The little brown house on the hill.

When old ghosts stalk abroad
At your memory's nod,
How the senses once more softly thrill
With a faint, far-off joy :—
You're the ghost of a boy
In the little brown house on the hill.

XLIII.

ROBINSON CRUSOE.

No single champion, with a peerless lance
Upholds the banner of thy fame, Defoe,
But dare a sneering cynic look askance,
And thousands wrangle for a chance to throw
The glove of combat in his face. For lo,
The company that read thy rude romance,—
The youthful minds its bold event enchants,
Like Jason's fabled serpent teeth upgrow
Into an army even Death in vain,
With his grim sword-scythe's heartless sweep
hath mown,
All ready art and armor to employ
In thy defence, who modelled with thy brain,
In form more daring than Carrara's stone,
The spirit of adventure in a boy.

XLIV.

ROMA.

What might was Thine who not alone Thy day
Of pride ruled o'er with vast supremacy,
When nations at Thy word bent humble knee,
And none refused Thy tribute stern to pay :
But who, now Ages mock Thee and Thy sway,
Mistress no longer over land and sea,
Known only through the tomes of History,
An empire fallen into dim decay,
Art greater yet than ever Thou hast been :
O'er tribes barbarian still retain Thy power :
Whose voice sonorous, heard above their din,
Christens the forest tree and frailest flower :
And curbs and drills with Thy strict discipline,
The untamed School-boy many a weary hour.

XLV.

NOVEMBER.

The golden light of Indian Summer setting,
Gray twilight creeps abroad ; the furred ones drowse
To their long sleep that knows no vain regretting ;
The wind sighs through the leafless forest boughs.
Hush !— Then the bugle-blast, with loud repeating,
Of that fierce Huntsman, Boreas, mingling makes
With yelping of the sky-pack, Southward fleeting
Through blinding snow-fog, from the Northern lakes.
The Harvest Feast a little while amasses
Good cheer, and flings the shivering Year a bone ;
Then Winter's wand upraised makes magic passes,
And all the earth is turned to silent stone.



THE WOODMAN'S AND THE RABBIT'S TRACK.

XLVI.

THE FOUR WINDS.

March gales, with ruddy, puffing cheek,
That whirl wayfarers' hats away,
And then with fierce derision shriek,—
Wild as the hares of March at play;
The winds that veer, and chase the vane
Till its own mind 'twill not aver,
And aerate the April rain
With incense of earth-life astir :
That kiss the mayflowers fugitive,
Then on my cheeks and forehead fawn ;
Their fickleness I still forgive,—
Their charms remembered when they're gone.

I love the wind that waves the grass
In Summertime, in billows green,
Or wafts with many a magic pass
The fragrance it has paused to glean,
From woodland blossoms, fair and sweet,
Or snatched unbidden from the rose,
Across the senses, fain to greet
An opiate of such kind repose ;
Or, in its might, so swift and strong,
An Ariel of unfancied form,
With rush as of an unseen throng,—
The herald of the thunder-storm.

The wind that shakes the walnuts down
And mourns its deed through barren boughs ;
Then drives in ranks of rustling brown
The listless leaves to mad carouse ;

Now casts the great ships on the rocks,
In equinoctial fits of rage,
Now yearns for Summer's perfumed locks,
Now dreams of Springtime's playful age.
Yet all its moods accord with mine ;
I dream again of days gone by,
Then long to buffet Fate's design,
Aspire, despair, laugh long and sigh.

But best of all I love, perhaps,
The wind of Winter, wild and weird,
That all the earth in snow-folds wraps,
Or sweeps bare hillsides with its beard.
That drives unbridled, all unchecked,
That mad white steed, the racing sleet,
Whose dripping flank the way hath flecked,
And hid the trace of muffled feet ;
Or with its piercing, drearsome whine
Betrays the frost-wolf at the door,
And sends a shudder down the spine
Of hearth-side listeners with its lore ;

That whistles with so shrill and sharp
A note, that earth's cheeks chill and blanch,
And plays a sad aeolian harp
On every brown and barren branch ;
That sends a thrill of joy and fear
To those that list and learn and live,—
A yearning for the past ; a tear
For all that friends and memory give.
Oh, Winds of Heaven, blow and blow,
Where'er thou listeth ; chant thy rune ;
All men must hearken ; *some* may know
The thrill of answering chords in tune.



BITTER COLD ON THE BARREN LEA.

XI,VII.

THE REVELER.

Jack Frost was out on a spree last night,
And painted the whole of the countryside white.
He pinched a late wayfarer well by the nose,
He tweaked at his ears and he trod on his toes.
He whispered a word in the last Rose's ear
So cold that she shivered and withered with fear.
Then off to the forest he hastily rushed
And squeezed the trees so that the Maple leaves
 blushed.

He split all the hazlenut burrs open wide,
And cracked the fat hickory nuts hard in the side ;
Maliciously set all the sumachs ablaze,
And locked up the crickets in underground ways.
In fact, he committed about every crime,
And had what he called just a jolly good time,
Till the morning at last put an end to his fun,
And he was placed under arrest by the Sun.

XLVIII.

SPARKS IN THE CHIMNEY.

I sit and watch the sparks fly up the chimney.
The long-pent soul of the wood is flitting back
 To its home with the stars ;
The stars that the oak in its strong young days
 looked up to
And whispered to in the cool peace of the nights,
 When the heavens beamed.

Dying now ; its trunk but a crackling ember ;
Still all aglow with the heat of life's last sap,
 Their image shines
Still bright and clear through the smoke-mist soon
 concealing
All else of earth from its eyes and mind and heart.
 See the sparks ! See the stars !

So I, when Death's Winter drearily comes a-stealing,
And the flames of life burn out in the battered trunk,
 Shall show how true
By the murmured word, by the thought that glim-
 mers brighter,
By the call, and the prayer flitting up to God,
 Was my heart to you.



BENEATH AN ARCH OF ELMS, GRASS-BORDERED STREETS.

XLIX.

A SEASIDE VILLAGE.

Beneath an arch of elms, grass-bordered streets
Where buttercup with dandelion competes
Who nearest to the danger line shall grow,
Where 'customed footsteps patter to and fro ;
And grown to place along their quiet way,
With back to wind and facing toward the bay,
The low-built cottages, with roof and wall
The color weather paints both great and small ;
Huge sea-shells Neptune once held to his lip,
At corners four now catch the gutter's drip ;
A turtle's back holds many a flowering stalk,
And coral sculpture decks the garden walk,
Where maiden ladies move with pensive tread
And dream of one who laid his youthful head
On pillows white like this, and fell asleep
Beneath the waves, in Indian waters deep.
What wonder that the seas from here to him
Are salt as tears ; that still the eyes grow dim
As Memory whispers of the hopes forgot
When typhoon cables cut and lover's-knot.

.

The walls that now so long a fearless front
Have outward turned against the tempest's brunt
And blustered threat and loud-outspoken boast,
As fierce it stalked all up and down the coast,
Bedecked within with many an ornament
By South Sea isle or Arctic cavern lent ;
The spotted cowry and the sea-beans dark ;
The fragile nautilus,—that fairy ark ;
Rude idols of the fur-clad Esquimaux ;
Grim war-clubs from the wilds of Borneo ;
Squat Buddhas, silent o'er the hearth's bright fires
As centuries ago o'er suttee pyres ;
The polished whale's-tooth, finely tattooed o'er
With fancies odd as sailor's arm e'er bore,
Or carven into many a polished frame,
Or feudal puppets of the checkered game ;
And little barkentines, full-rigged and taut,—
Model perchance of one whose timbers rot
Ten times ten fathoms deep, where fishes spawn
Among the spars that birds once nested on ;
And treasure chests of camphor wood, inlaid
With ebony and ivory, and made
In the long hours of calm below the Line,
Where glassy sea and glaring heaven shine,
Or 'tween the watches, filled with little cheer,
The idle hours of many a lonesome year
When whittling winged the thought to wife or maid,
And e'en at times the brain from madness stayed

In the long monotones of day and night
And sea, with nothing else in sight
But phantoms of a village church and green,—
A little cot,—a mother's tender een.

.

Down where the waves roll up along the strand,
And leave upon the whitened slope of sand
A tangled twist of seaweeds, soft and rare,
Combed by the breakers from some mermaid's hair,
Or riches fair in gold and silver shells,
Or music shut in lime-encrusted bells,
Or some strange monsters sacrificed to Earth,
Like evil genii of the water's birth :
With cordage strewn, and nets and lobster-pots,
And upturned keels beset with leprous spots
Of barnacle, that fungus of the sea,—
To boats what mistletoe is to the tree,—
Storm-beaten wharves, the land's adopted capes,
Stretch seaward welcome hands to whom escapes
The wind's wild wrath, the reef's dark treachery,
And all that threats who go down to the sea ;
Or wave the last farewell to outward bound,
When sails are set and creaking capstan wound.
Here oil-skinned fisher-folk scowl at the sky,
And foretell weather with a cast of eye,
Or leaning 'gainst the rock-embedded piles
Spin wondrous yarns of other where and whiles,
And bare-legged urchins, silently discreet,

Land now and then a chogset at their feet.

.

Spry catboats down the bay are coming back
The zigzag course of many a shortened tack :
Or left becalmed, flap like a wounded wing
The futile sail, till breezes succor bring ;
And far across the sound a liner sends
A puff of smoke where sky and ocean ends :

.

Along the shore, where ripples run and break
Upon the sandy flats in endless wake
At ebb of tide, sandpipers stalk, and crows
Caw gruffly o'er the prize the wavelet throws
Up toward the pebbled beach ; the sea-gull's shriek
Sounds like the whirling pulley's labored creak
When halliards tighten, in stong hands held fast,
And gaff and sail creep slowly up the mast :
His shadow glances o'er the fretted foam
And Cancer scuttles to his rockweed home ;
Low, twisted cedars, hung with shredded lace,
Behind the rock-walled Coast the tempests face :
A jagged point upholds a beacon light
Above a rounded tower of ghostly white ;
And when the muffling fog flings wide its arms
An unseen horn blurts forth its hoarse alarms.

.

Forth from these wharves a thousand men set sail,
And tried their canvas stout on every gale ;



DOWN WHERE THE WAVES ROLL UP ALONG THE STRAND.

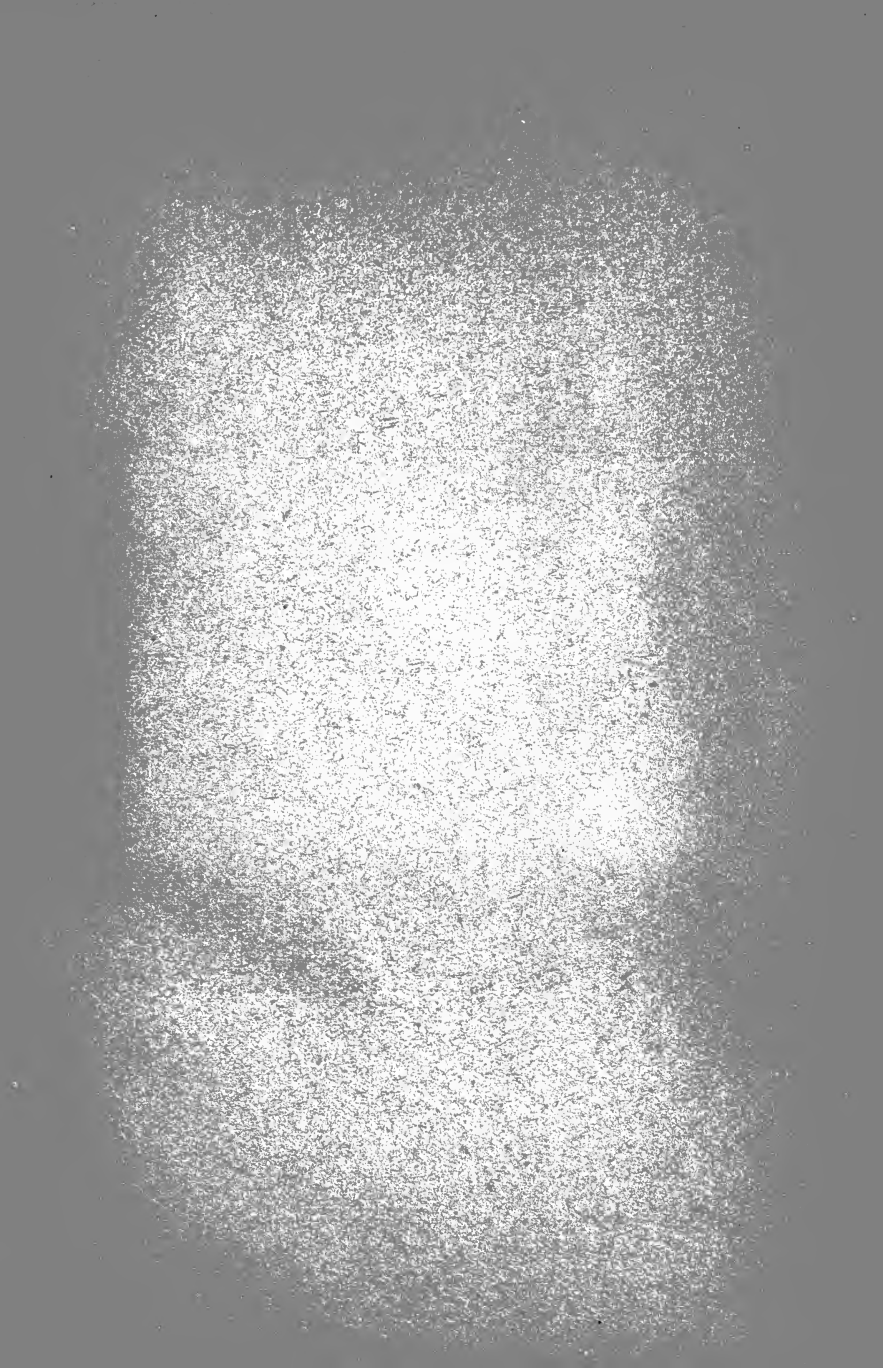
From every gulf the seven lands half hide,
A soul has for this quiet haven cried ;
To this the merchant of the India trade
Returned whene'er a fortune fair was made ;
To this the captain and the whaler's crew,
When all their perils were gone safely through,
And four long years had sped the exile term,
Came home with hold full-stowed with barrels sperm.
Its pastures green, red-dotted with the kine,
Between gray walls embossed with briar and vine :
Its woodland paths where Youth was wont to stray
And gather fragrance in the month of May,
Or share the acorns scattered of the oak
In Autumn days with nimble squirrel folk,
And list the pines' low whisper to the breeze
Of wonders fair as wishes, over seas :
Its quiet streets, where in the first-love's charm
He lingered homeward with her on his arm
From pious worship on the Sunday morn,
Or from some evening frolic,—husking corn—
Or quilting party—when the midnight air
Awoke to mingled song and laughter rare ;
All call the traveler with a siren's power
Home to the haunts of Youth's short happy hour,
And every clime gives back its borrowed brood
Except the sea, which keeps its tithe for good.
Ah, he shall find, who loves to linger here,
Traditions salted in the atmosphere

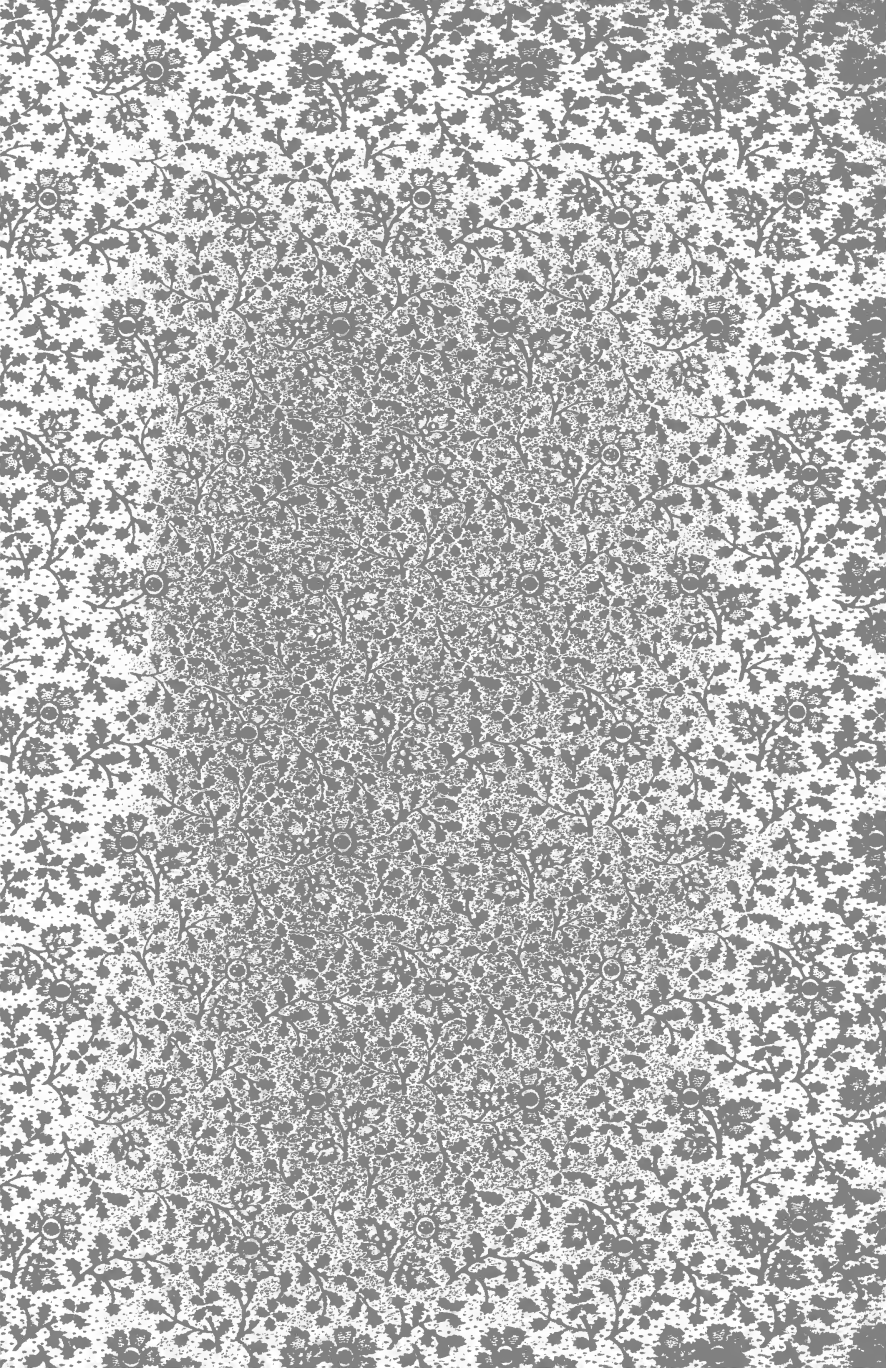
As thickly as the herring and the cod
When seine and line do well the deep defraud.

.

A dreamy air seems o'er the town to croon,
The sunshine sleeps the long still afternoon,
And shadows of the past seem to unfold
Full many a tale of olden time untold.
The wanderer o'er the troubled sea of life,
Come safe to port here after all the strife,
May think himself, aye, more than three times blest,
At harbor in this quiet place of rest.







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